



UNDERSTANDING CARING THROUGH ARTS AND MEDICINE ELECTIVE COURSE, UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH, COLLEGE OF MEDICINE APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

“Education is a process, not a single objective”.

Interest in the arts and medical humanities has led to heightened awareness of the role that the arts can play in medical sciences education. The study of arts and humanities can provide much of the context, values and meanings necessary to counterbalance the relentless reductionism of the biomedical sciences, which rely on knowledge that enhances the order and predictability of diagnosis, investigation and treatment. It helps medical students to be able to relate their studies and practices to “real people” and to their lived experiences of health, illness, disease, disability, death, suffering or recovery.

This paper describes such an experience; an innovative 3 credit hours, elective course “arts and medicine” taken by 35 students at medical and health sciences campus at the University of Sharjah, UAE; (fall/spring semesters). The core objectives of the course are to develop the Medical and health sciences students' awareness of the spiritual and humanistic components of healthcare, to encourage their curiosity about the human condition along with skepticism about the nature of medical “truth”; and to model acceptable moral behaviors. Through their exposure to the various movies which chosen very carefully, to dramatically depict complex ethical, professional, psychological and/or clinical problems that help students to explore and discuss the many aspects of the ethics of healthcare.

The elective course has been met with high levels of enthusiasm and interest. It fills immediately and other students inquire about additional spots each semester. The evaluation of the course over 3 years has demonstrated a sharpening of the students' awareness that art represents a significant reflexive source of insight into patients' and doctors' experiences within the socio-cultural and historical of medical practice. It also appeared to strengthen the consciousness of the young future healthcare professionals that art can not only be used efficiently to distract from illness, but also, even directed as a tool to cure and heal.

KEYWORDS: Medical Humanities- elective course- Drama- professionalism- education

Introduction

More than a century ago, Oliver Wendell Holmes concluded in his book, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* (1883):

“The longer I live, the more I am satisfied of two things. First, that the truest lives are those that are cut rose-diamond fashion, with many facets. Second, that society in one way or another is always trying to grind us down to a single flat surface.” (Oliver Wendell Holmes 1883)

This quotation illustrates that patients are not inanimate objects associated with single physical diseases; they are in fact complex individuals with complex feelings, thoughts and anxieties. The arts, through their variety, are capable of addressing this complexity of human beings while having a grand potential to provide professionals practicing medicine and health care with additional skills to improve the quality of life of those we look after (Calman, 2008).

There is a considerable—to date largely unexploited—potential for inculcating the arts into medicine. Art, like medicine, demands great intellectual and psychological involvement. Art would appear to have the capacity to stimulate the senses and immediately engage the brain; its effect is powerful, intense; it can bring to life the description and devastation of disease better than a set of data (MacNaughton, 2000; Yang et al., 2011).

Up until the late 1960s, the focus of medicine and the health sciences education was largely given over to developing the students' scientific knowledge and skills required of a doctor; it was restricted to functionality and subordinated to rather utilitarian considerations. An authentically optimal allocation of human resources as well as a humane potential, though, goes significantly beyond materialistic schemes (Cooke et al., 2006).

In 1993, The General Medical Council (GMC 1993) acknowledged that medical education needed radical rethinking, and in their document, *Tomorrow's Doctors*, recommended a greater focus on a more modern approach to medical education, all of which directed towards a more holistic practitioner. This was later supported by other authors who referred to the more “humane” doctor with an holistic understanding, assisted by an interpretative ability, insight, and creative vision, ultimately governed by ethical sensitivity, to apply this scientific evidence and skills to the individual patient (Macnaughton, 2000) (Education Committee of General Medical Council, 1993).

A humanistic physician is one who considers the influence of patients' social, cultural, spiritual and emotional experiences when caring for others (Miller and Schmidt, 1999). Humanism is considered to be an essential component of professionalism, a core competency of physicians (Cohen and Sherif, 2014; Mueller, 2008). Professionalism can be defined as a collection of attitudes, values, behaviors and relationships that act as the foundation of the health profession's contract with society (Royal College of Physicians, 2005). It is an essential ability to be instilled in medical students, alongside biomedical knowledge and clinical skills (Baingana et al., 2010). The process of professionalism attainment is very long and affected by many factors among which the education process is regarded to be the crucial one (Kirk, 2007).

Professionalism topics are often a part of a so called “hidden curriculum”, which means that its determinants do not operate within the formal curriculum as a separate lesson, but in a more subtle and less officially recognized educational activity which make them difficult to teach but nevertheless should be taught (Sade et al., 1985).

Interactive teaching methods using art as a teaching tool are very efficient (Pavlov and Dahlquist, 2010; Winter and Birnberg, 2006). Movies, for example, present developed scenarios and are a form of controlled environment, which enables reproducible, focused and independent student learning. Through art, students are able to understand patients in their whole context (Blasco et al., 2006; Klemenc-Ketis and Kersnik, 2011).

In the integrated, problem-based, medical curriculum of the University of Sharjah, College of Medicine, United Arab Emirates, the emphasis of the medical graduate's profile is clearly defined not only within the realm of the physician's role in medicine, which is related to achieving the higher hierarchical levels of the three learning domains (cognition, psychomotor and affective), but also in learning and sharing an individually unique element with their patients; their human qualities.

In 2010, the "Arts and Medicine" course was established as an integral part of the medical student's elective course system—under the guidance of behavioral physiologist. Positioned as an alternative to the "History of Medicine" course, the other humanities elective course that was established at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences in 2008. The course is taught jointly to medical students, dental students, pharmacy students and health sciences students. Using movies to teach professionalism and humanistic values to medical students, such as honesty, integrity, caring, compassion, altruism, empathy, and respect for self, patients, peers, and other health care professionalism.

Course objectives:

The arts and Medicine is an innovative 3 credit hours, 3 month elective course taken by 35 students at medical and health sciences campus at the University of Sharjah, UAE; each September and January. The core objectives of the course are to develop the Medical and health sciences students' awareness of the spiritual and humanistic components of healthcare, to encourage their curiosity about the human condition along with skepticism about the nature of medical "truth"; and to model acceptable moral behaviors. Through their exposure to highly selected 4 movies, that encourage them to explore and discuss the many aspects of the ethics and professionalism of healthcare.

Course description :

Using movies which dramatically depict complex ethical, professional, psychological and/or clinical problems will help to engage a generation of medical students in reflections and discussions on a wide variety of crucial issues in contemporary health care.

Four feature-length commercial movies which dramatically depict complex ethical, professional, psychological and/or clinical problems were carefully selected. These movies were intended for the general public, initially screened at cinemas and subsequently widely available. They were all products of the entertainment industry and so the explicit or implicit ethical, professional, psychological and/or clinical problems themes were embedded in a product that was created primarily as a leisure activity. That is these movies were not primarily designed as educational vehicles for students in the health sciences or any other discipline. Amongst the Professional themes were those of people with special needs in the community, impact of genetic diseases and disabilities on the patients' physical and psychological attitude, homelessness, Doctors-patients relationship, breaking bad news and decision making (see Table 1 for movie titles and brief descriptions).

Movie title (Year)	Brief description (using the wording on the handout given to all the students at the start of the elective course)
The elephant man (1980)	The Elephant Man is a 1980 American-British biographical film about John Merrick, a severely deformed man in 19th century London. Treated as a sideshow freak, Merrick is assumed to be retarded. In fact, he is highly intelligent and sensitive, a fact made public when one Dr. Frederick Treves rescues Merrick from a carnival.
The doctor (1991)	A drama about a man who becomes an extraordinary surgeon, as well as an extraordinary person, once he experiences firsthand what it's like being an ordinary patient. It gives good insight into the difference a sensitive doctor can make and how much damage a doctor can do by not listening closely enough.

The Gifted Hands (2009)	Inspired by his mother to never give up, Detroit native Ben Carson overcomes poverty and prejudice to become a neurosurgeon. How he deal with his patient, How to talk and communicate with his patients and how he take decisions.
Hear the silence (2003)	About a mother's search for answers about her son's Autism

The students were encouraged to view the movies away from the classroom setting (i.e., usually in their own homes), and encourage to consider the nature of ethics and professionalism messages contained within each movie.

The following teaching methods were used: group work with discussion, role play and individual work. For the group work, the students go into in depth discussions about the professional and ethical issues covered in the movie within the groups and with the tutor. Followed by role play performance by each group in certain issues, like students perform when learning how to consult with a patient or how to break bad news in professional and non professional way, doctor patient communication and other ethical issues. During the role play, The students are allowed to use any other artistic tools like music, video taping, painting, texting or movements. For the individual work, at the end of each movie, each student had to write an essay describing and discussing his or her observations about the movie and the impact of the movie in his/her attitudes, empathy and believes. The course instructor gives students feedback on their writing weekly for about an hour. Writings are shared with peers within each group, and feedback is given by each group in an open discussion. These group discussions encourage the students to understand many aspects of humanities like the patient's doctor relationship, dealing with people with special needs, motivation and inspiration...etc and encourage the students to incorporate and inculcate these aspects in their life. At the end of the course, the groups writing is compiled, published and distributed to all students.

Portfolio

Students prepare a portfolio in which they record their reflections on personal issues and reactions to classroom discussions. In addition, each student is asked to peer and self assess the portfolio. This methodology helps to engaging and empower them to develop student self-regulation and metacognition, improve student communication skills, and create better student understands of the criteria used to evaluate their work (Andrade and Valtcheva, 2009).

Student's Evaluation

Students are evaluated on the following: (1) a portfolio submission at the end of the elective course, (2) class participation, (3) presentations and role plays, and (4) written essay as based on the following questions (1) which positive and negative behavioral, communication and consultation elements of health professionals they encountered, (2) during the course, what would they do in similar situations as seen in the different situation discussed, (3) how did the movies and discussion affect their feeling, beliefs, values, (4) how do they think the movies and discussion will influence their future professional and personal life.

Course evaluation

At the end of the course, students complete a narrative evaluation of the course. All comments and suggestions have been very positive and full of enthusiasm:

"it is more than a simple elective course, it is a life changing experience".

"I have become a more confident, kinder, nicer, and more caring person".

"During this course, I Have learned that a doctor without ethics or determination is not a real doctor".

"we are missing such learning needs in our curriculum".

Conclusion

Some modern physicians would have failed miserably in the past: they don't know how to talk to people. They lack the common touch; they do not know how to be helpfully present or how to use the power of words. Another group of doctors would have made fine physicians 200 years ago, and can now employ their additional technical skills for the added benefit of patients. They are talking doctors, even if their specialty involves only a tiny portion of the anatomy. They treat their patients like people. Both kinds of doctors can emerge from our current educational system with the means to diagnose illness and intervene in disease. But only those who are sensitive to the meanings within the discourse of medicine, and who provide respectful treatment, will be successful in their encounters with patients in the sorts of human ways that have always mattered (Schiedermayer, 1989).

The medical literature provides a number of reports on the importance of the humanities in modern medical education (Anderson and Schiedermayer, 2003; Mathiasen and Alpert, 2001; Shapiro and Lie, 2000). Using drama in medical education and their discussion of movies from psychological point of view may help to reflect on empathy related issues, to develop more compassionate approach to patients and their suffering, enhance awareness about stigmatizing attitudes (Feggi et al., 2014), to recognize the importance of doctor patient communication and doctors' selfish personal interest (Klemenc-Ketis and Kersnik, 2011). As concluded by (Klemenc and Kersnik, 2011), we quote their phrases, that the controlled environment of movies during the arts and medicine elective course at College of Medicine University of Sharjah, successfully enabled our students to explore their values, beliefs, and attitudes towards features of professionalism without feeling that their personal integrity had been threatened (Klemenc-Ketis and Kersnik, 2011).

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